Instructor: Steve Leone  
Office: 340X McKenzie Hall  
Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 1-2:30PM or by appointment  
Email: sleone@uoregon.edu or via Canvas  
Meeting Period: Tuesday & Thursday 10-11:20AM  
Meeting Location: Prince Lucian Campbell Hall (PLC) 189

Aims

At its core HIST 378: American Environmental History to 1890 is an exploration of the ways that humans and their environments have shaped or been shaped by one another. Strong interdisciplinary interests ranging from geology to geography (to name only two) mark environmental history. During our time together, we will ask and explore several larger questions: How has the environment shaped human actions in North America, its cultural systems, and social development? How has the human mind (from the indigenous to the immigrant) conceived of the natural world surrounding them? How have humans altered or changed the natural environment of North America? How have struggles and conflicts, between the various people whom have called North America home, been reordered or shaped by environmental factors? To answer these questions and more, we will read and analyze both primary and secondary source materials and
interpret them together through active and daily discussions. Additionally, at two points during our time together we will supplement our daily investigations by going into greater depth concerning larger course themes via short response essays. Ideally, by the end of the course we will have demonstrated the myriad ways that the history of North America is inseparable from its natural environment.

Course Objectives
By the end of the course, you should be able to:
- Trace the history of changes to the American environment over time
- Analyze and interpret “primary” sources of historical information
- Identify an author’s argument or thesis
- Write an essay and develop your own argument and support it with historical evidence

Books (Please Purchase if Possible)

Course Requirements/Grade Components
1. Two “Journal” Responses (5% each)
2. Three Short analytical Papers (10% each)
3. “Term Paper” (25%)
4. Final Exam (25%)
5. Participation (10%)

Journals: For the readings on “Kennecott Journey: The Paths Out of Town” (Week 1) and excerpts from Walden (Week 6), you will write a journal entry of about 350 words on Canvas. Your entry must be posted before the class discussion on each reading, as the assignment portal will “close” before we begin that day. (Students who enroll after Week 1 may post that week’s journal entry at a later date, by arrangement with me.) For each set of readings, select one interesting aspect and record your reflections, thoughts, and insights. The journals do not need to be formal essays, though they should be structured by your own argument; beyond that, they need to show thoughtful reflection on relevant themes. They should be neither rants nor reviews. Do not gush. Strong “A” journals will show some depth of understanding and cite examples to support your points.

Critical Response Essays: For each of the three major books we are investigating you will write a 750-1000 word analytical response essay. Within these responses, you will analyze a major thematic idea, the author’s argument, or some other issue you find provocative or interesting. The goal is to reflect and think about the works that you are reading, not to write a book report or review. I will provide questions to help guide your reading.
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*Term paper:* For the term paper, you will select a published primary source written by an explorer or traveler in the eighteenth or nineteenth century. I will provide a list for you to choose from. You will read and analyze this source, using questions that I provide as guidance. You will then write a paper of 1,500-2,500 words (or 6-9 pages), plus bibliography, that makes an argument about the person’s ideas about nature, places those ideas within a broader historical context, offers a brief biographical sketch, and engages at least three passages of the document in a close textual analysis. You may find background information and guidance in my lectures and in the following books, in the Knight Library: Richard Judd, *The Untilled Garden*; Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy*; Kathleen A. Brosnan, ed., *The Encyclopedia of American Environmental History*; and Douglas Cazaux Sackman, *A Companion to American Environmental History*. I will provide more detail about how to do this assignment in class and on Canvas. You must select your source by **Tuesday, Oct. 10,** at the beginning of class. Your paper is **due by 5 p.m. on Saturday, December 1.** Note: Late term papers will be graded down 5 points for each day it is late, including weekends. I will accept no papers after the final exam. Early papers are always welcome!

I will judge your essay on the basis of your choice of source material (that is, your selection of pages within the source you choose), the quality of your argument and evidence, the biographical sketch and the context you develop for the subject, your explication of at least three passages from your primary source, and the quality of the writing.

*Final Exam:* The final exam will consist of a short answer section and an essay component that will cover both the readings and major ideas we have discussed throughout the course **and will be administered and due via Canvas during Finals Week (Dec. 3-7).**

*Participation:* Participation matters greatly in this course and as such, I have placed a significant value on it to reward those who are active and constructive during our class time together. Key to your participation grade will be keeping up with the assigned readings that will form key parts of our in class discussions. Finally, attendance will be taken each class.

**Late Work Policy**

If you have an emergency, please contact me before the due date of any assignment passes. For each DAY an assignment is late, your grade will drop a half letter grade. No late assignments for the class will be accepted after the date of our final exam.

**Classroom Policies**

- Please refrain from side conservations while in class, any outside conservation will distract the other students who are actively engaged in class.
- Please put your cell phones on silent or turn them off completely before class starts, also no texting/emailing or reading texts/email during class.
- You may use laptops but if you do please place yourself in the back row so you will not distract the other students around you. Additionally, I reserve the right to forbid laptops in the classroom if it becomes apparent that they are being used for purposes other than note taking (social networking I am looking at you).
- Please try your best to avoid being late.
Class Preparation
Like all history classes, this course requires significant reading and preparation. It is critical that you take the time to carefully read the assigned textbook, understand all of the key terms highlighted in each paragraph, and outline the major themes developed in the readings. Everyone reads at a different pace, but you should budget your time wisely to prepare for each class.

Grading Standards (Adopted from Department of History)
A+: Work of unusual distinction. This grade is rarely awarded.
A: Work that distinguishes itself by the excellence of its grasp of the material and the precision and insight of its argument, in addition to being well executed and reasonably free of errors.
B: Work that satisfies the main criteria of the assignment and demonstrates command of the material, but does not achieve the level of excellence that characterizes work of A quality.
C: Work that demonstrates a rudimentary grasp of the material and satisfies at least some of the assigned criteria reasonably well.
D: Work that demonstrates a poor grasp of the material.
F: Work that is weak in every aspect, demonstrating a basic misunderstanding of the material and/or disregard for the assignment, or it is plagiarized.

For the department's official standards, see: https://history.uoregon.edu/undergraduate/grading-policy/

Academic Integrity & Plagiarism
All work that you turn in must be your own. Any work submitted for credit that includes the words or ideas of anyone else must fully and accurately identify your source with a citation. Note that replacing words with synonyms, changing verb tense, stringing together phrases from a source, or other minor alterations does not qualify as paraphrasing. Even with a citation, failure to put quotation marks around direct quotations constitutes plagiarism, because it implies that the writing is your own. (By the way, submitting the same paper to more than one class for credit is also academic misconduct.) In the event of an act of plagiarism or other academic misconduct, I will impose sanctions, as provided in the Student Code of Conduct. The minimum penalty will be a 0 on the assignment, but plagiarism can also merit an F in the course, even for a first offense.

See: https://policies.uoregon.edu/vol-3-administration-student-affairs/ch-1-conduct/student-conduct-code

If you are confused about this or do not understand the consequences of academic dishonesty at the UO—or the ethical issues behind these university policies—please read these guidelines: https://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism/whycite

Accommodations
This course supports access and inclusion for students with disabilities. This includes but is not limited to exam adjustments, sign language interpretation, classroom relocation, and adaptive technology services available to students who register with the Accessible Education Center (AEC).

You can find more information at: https://acc.uoregon.edu/
**Safe Learning Environment**

As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment for my students. I am required to report any instances of sexual harassment, sexual violence and/or other forms of prohibited discrimination. If you would rather share information about sexual harassment, sexual violence or discrimination with a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can find a list of those individuals at https://safe.uoregon.edu/services. Each resource is clearly labeled as either “required reporter,” “confidential UO employee,” or “off-campus,” to allow you to select your desired level of confidentiality.

I reserve the right to make any changes to this syllabus at any time with reasonable notice to you. Changes will be announced in class and through Canvas. It is your responsibility to be aware of any changes in assignments, readings, and due dates. For these reasons, it is imperative that you check your email account associated with the University of Oregon frequently, at least once a day.

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Schedule of Lectures and Readings

**Week 1 – Beginnings**

Tuesday, Sept. 25: Introduction
  Readings: None

Thursday, Sept. 27: Nature in Native America
  ►Journals on Cronon due on Canvas by 9:59AM (Thursday, September 27)

**Week 2 – Ecological Imperialism**

Oct. 2: Columbian Exchange – the Good…
  Readings: Ted Steinberg, Chap. 2 “A Truly New World” (pp. 22-40) from Down to Earth [Canvas]

Oct. 4: Columbian Exchange – the Bad, and the Ugly…
  Readings: “Conquest and Disease” selections [Canvas]

**Week 3 – Early America Transformed**

Oct. 9: Colonization and Commodification of New World Nature (Pt. I)
  Readings: None

Oct. 11: Col. & Com. of New World (Pt. II)/Discussion of Creatures of Empire
  Readings: Anderson, Creatures of Empire (entire)
  ►Essay on Creatures of Empire due on Canvas at 9:59AM

**Week 4 – The Birth of Nature’s Nation**

Oct. 16: Jeffersonian America & the Nature of the American War for Independence
  Readings: Thomas Jefferson, Notes on Virginia, “Query 13”

Oct. 18: Imagining Nature in the Early Republic
  Readings: Richard W. Judd, Chap. 2 “Rambles in Eden” (pp. 55-93) from The Untilled Garden
  Natural History and the Spirit of Conservation in America, 1740-1840 [Canvas]
Week 5 – Industrial Change, Environmental Cost
Oct. 23: Revolutions in Industry, Changes in Nature
  Readings: None
Oct. 25: Animal Extinctions
  Readings: Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison* (entire)
  ► *Essay on Destruction of the Bison due on Canvas by 9:59 AM*

Week 6 – Redefining Wilderness
Oct. 30: The Transcendentalists
  Reading: Henry David Thoreau, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (excerpts) [Canvas]
  ► *Journal Response to Thoreau due on Canvas by 9:59 AM*
Nov. 1: No Class (Work on your term paper)

Week 7 – Antebellum Landscapes
Nov. 6: Landscaping Nature
Nov. 8: King Cotton: Domination, Resistance, and Nature in the American South
  Readings: Solomon Northrup, *Twelve Years A Slave*, excerpts [Canvas]

Week 8 – Urban Nature
Nov. 13: Organic Cities
  Readings: None
Nov. 15: Animals in the City
  Readings: McShane and Tarr, *The Horse in the City* (entire)
  ► *Essay on The Horse in the City due on Canvas by 9:59 AM*

Week 9 – War and Nature
Nov. 20: The Nature of Disunion
  Readings: Megan Kate Nelson, Chap. 4 “Battle Logs: Ruined Forests” (pp. 103-159) from *Ruin Nation: Destruction in the American Civil War* [Canvas]
Nov. 22: No Class, Thanksgiving Holiday (Enjoy!) [PS Term Paper…]

Week 10 – On the Precipice of the 20th Century
Nov. 26: Dispossessing Natives in the Name of Wilderness
  Readings: Mark David Spence, Chaps. 3 & 4 “Before the Wilderness” and “First Wilderness” (pp. 41-70) from *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* [Canvas]
Nov. 29: Reflections and Review (for the Final Exam)
  ► *Term paper due by 5 p.m., on Saturday Dec. 1, through Canvas (early papers welcome!)*
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